Log of Meeting

Purpose: To discuss electric blanket standards activities in the United States and United Kingdom.

Time: 17 November 1998. 9:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Location: US Consumer Product Safety Commission. 4330 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD 20814

LOG ENTRY SOURCE: Aaron Banerjee, ESEE/ES

Attendees:

Robin Spencer	Sambrook, International
Gordon Gillerman	Underwriter's Laboratories
David Baker	Thompson, Hine, & Flory
Aaron Banerjee	CPSC - Engineering
Jay Tilley	Product Safety Letter

Summary:

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and compare electric blanket activities in the US and UK.

It became apparent that there are distinct differences regarding the electric blankets in England and the US. Mr Spencer stated that electric "under blankets" (electric fitted mattress pads) are far more common (approximately 90%) of the British market. In the United states, "over blankets" (electric blankets meant to be placed on top of the user) are more common.

Since after 1985, most of the electric blankets produced in the United States utilize a Positive Temperature Coefficient (PTC) heating element. Older blankets used a resistive coil heating element and were equipped with discrete thermostats along the heating element for overheat protection. The number of fire incidents has decreased since the shift from resistive to PTC heating elements.

In Britain, the resistive heating element is the most common type of heating element used in electric blankets. Mr Spencer described three types of heating elements:

The first (and oldest) type was simply a resistor with no overheat protection on the blanket (under blanket). Mr Spencer noted that these were the most prone to fire.

The second type included a sensing wire separated from the heating element by a thermoplastic material. In the case of an overheating condition, the thermoplastic material will melt, allowing the sensing wire to touch the heating element and shut

off the blanket. The problem with the second type was that the thermoplastic material would age and not melt in case of an overheat.

The third type is the same as the second except that a thermoplastic material which did not age as quickly was chosen (Polyethylene).

Comparing estimates of numbers of fire incidents and deaths, it was noted that the number of fires was greater in Britain relative to the number of blankets.